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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 002295

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL, INR/AA;
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [ENRG](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIAN NUGGETS -- DECEMBER 18, 2009

REF: ABUJA 2260 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Political Counselor James P. McAnulty
for reasons in Sections 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) Mission Nigeria provides the following compilation of recent political, economic, and social developments not previously reported.

JONATHAN INAUGURATES PRESIDENTIAL COMMITTEE

¶2. (C) Vice President Goodluck Jonathan inaugurated December 15 a new Niger Delta post-amnesty committee known as the "Presidential ComASfnLQental Clean-up Remediation; and Infrastructure Development. Members of the Modalities Committee include the Minister of State for Petroleum (as Chairperson), Minister of State for Finance, Special Adviser to the President on Petroleum Matters, Special Adviser to the President on Communications, representatives of the Solicitor General of the Federation/Permanent Secretary, Justice Ministry, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, representatives of three former militant leaders, and two Niger Delta community leaders.

¶3. (C) UNDP Country Director Turhan Saleh told PolMilOff last week that General Abbe had originally planned to await President Yar'Adua's return from hospitalization in Saudi Arabia before inaugurating the new committees. (COMMENT: The inauguration of this new Committee for one of President Yar'Adua's signal initiatives reflects the gradual transfer of power from the ailing Nigerian President to his deputy as well as tacit support from the Defense Minister for Constitutional succession. The new Committee and Sub-committees replace earlier ones that former militants had claimed to be plagued by cronyism and corruption. END COMMENT.)

NIGERIA REACHES OUT TO UNDP

¶4. (C) The Nigerian Government (GON) has reached out to United Nations Development Program (UNDP) partners and shown willingness to accept international involvement in the post-amnesty demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration (DRR) process. GON Amnesty Committee Chairperson and Defense Minister, retired General Abbe, told UNDP Country Director Turhan Saleh in mid-November that the GON would like to meet with UNDP Mission Heads mid-to-late December to discuss increased international involvement in

the Niger Delta. Previously, Abbe had repeatedly rejected UNDP overtures for international technical assistance, calling the Niger Delta a problem that required "a purely Nigerian solution." UNDP Mission Heads and Development Directors met in Abuja December 10 to discuss the offer to engage the GON on the Niger Delta.

15. (C) UNDP consultants previously circulated several drafts of a working paper on "Support for Stabilization, Recovery, and Development in the Niger Delta," to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.K. Department for International Development (DFID), World Bank, European Union, and diplomatic missions of Canada, France, Germany, Japan, and diplomatic missions of Canada, France, Germany, Japan, The Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. The working paper expresses support for continued peace-building and conflict prevention efforts, without committing donor nations to future contributions of funding and technical assistance. The plan provides short, mid, and long-term priorities from a UN-drafted Operations Plan provided to General Abbe at his request. UNDP has not publicly released the Operations Plan, at the request of the GON Amnesty committee, which has used the plan in "checklist format," according to Turhan. Though still waiting on a formal invitation to engage the GON, UNDP intends to send the working paper no later than December 21. Turhan stated that UNDP is "extremely concerned" about GON

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failure to launch the DRR process and the reluctance of the Amnesty Committee to leverage international expertise.

EX-MILITANTS SEEK STRONG U.S. STATEMENT

16. (C) Niger Delta stakeholders told PolMilOff December 10 that progress in the post-amnesty rehabilitation process remained "completely stalled" and would move forward only if international partners placed "significant external pressure" on the GON to act on promises of development and ex-militant training. Niger Delta Technical Committee (NDTC) Chairpersons and Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) President Ledum Mitee, University of Nigeria Professor and Institute for Sustainable Development Head Okey Ibeanu, and Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN) Country Director Inemo Samiama told PolMilOff that ex-militants had quickly grown impatient in camps in Rivers, Bayelsa, and Delta States, which they recently visited. They asked for a strong USG statement that not only expresses support for the peace process, but calls for "a clear timetable, measurable indicators, transparency, and independent monitoring" of the process. They requested a "blunt" statement similar to the one the Secretary gave regarding corruption during her August visit. Inemo expressed concern over a Port Harcourt waterfront demolition project that allegedly displaced about 200,000 people. He claimed that fifteen persons remained missing after soldiers disrupted a peaceful protest at the site October 12.

AKWA IBOM ANNOUNCES MORE POWER -- AGAIN

17. (U) The Independent Power Plant (IPP) under construction at Ikot Abasi since 2001 and designed to generate 100 megawatts of electricity may finally become operational in early 2010 after several delays. Akwa Ibom Power and Steel Commissioner Dr. Lanre Babalola praised Governor Akpabio as the "first" Nigerian Governor "to actualize the power dream of making electricity available within every five kilometers' radius." (COMMENT: This dream remains unfulfilled, however, as the power plant, originally scheduled to become operational in 2006 and described by Governor Akpabio as "95 percent finished" in October 2008, has yet to generate electricity. END COMMENT.)

SURVEY SHOWS SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT IN LITERACY

¶18. (U) The recently published 2008 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey demonstrated a five-percent increase in women's literacy and a 1.9 percent increase in men's literacy between 2003 and 2008. Such figures, although possibly insignificant statistically, may indicate some positive movement in overall literacy due to efforts by the GON and international development partners in education during the past five years.

Despite the possible positive trend, the troubled Northeast region experienced a setback of 2 percent. Other survey results indicated that much more needed to be done, especially in maternal and child health. For example, although the under-five mortality rate decreased from 187 to 157, a massive increase in simple, inexpensive, and effective interventions would be needed to significantly improve infant mortality.

Qmortality.

BUDGET INCREASE

¶19. (U) Following the Health Ministry's request for emergency help in procuring family-planning commodities in August, the USAID - Nigeria Health Team worked with Ministry counterparts and other donors to promote better use of forecasting in the Ministry. USAID Mission Director strongly encouraged increased GON funding, after which the Minister announced in early December that he had assigned about 1.3 million dollars to cover a recent shortfall and included about 21.5 million dollars in his 2010 budget request. USAID will work with other donors to monitor budget execution and promote program sustainability.

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CONGEN VISITS BEST FOODS

¶10. (U) Lagos Consul General and Agricultural Attache visited December 16 the medium-sized, food-processing company Best Foods that specializes in livestock and seafood processing for hotels, restaurants, and retail outlets in Lagos. Best Foods operates an abattoir for cattle goats and poultry and fish farms on a six-acre tract on the Lekki peninsula in Lagos State. Most ruminant production in Nigeria, however, occurs in the Northern States, mainly in rural areas. Such producers, who graze cattle, goats, and sheep in the North must transport these animals hundreds of miles over poorly-maintained roads to major markets in the south. Best Foods plans to build a feed lot in nearby states to overcome this challenge and expand business. Company officials expressed interest in purchasing U.S. equipment and technical know-how for increasing operations. Best Foods is currently working with World Initiative for Soy in Human Health, a Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) industry partner that promotes the use of U.S. soy ingredients, such as textured soy, in foods.

LAGOS STATE EMPOWERS YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE

¶11. (U) Agricultural Attache visited Lagos State Agricultural Training Institute in Epe December 16. The Institute involves a collaborative program, begun in 2008 with Israel, that teaches youth about commercial farming. Currently, the Institute teaches 100 students in diverse subjects involving poultry, aquaculture, fruits and vegetables, bee keeping, and agricultural business. This first group, currently enrolled in an intensive, six-month farming course, will enroll in a 12-month internship on commercial farming under the

Institute's supervision. FAS will examine ways to support this initiative through capacity building.

NEW CONSULTANT ON MARKETS PROJECT

12.(U) USAID - Nigeria recently hired a consultant to conduct an assessment of the Maximizing Agricultural Revenue and Key Enterprises in Targeted Sites (MARKETS) project implemented by Chemonics International, Incorporated. MARKETS, 52-million-dollar economic growth activity, began in 2005 and is projected to end in December 2010. The assessment will identify and analyze best practices and lessons learned to inform the design of a follow-on project. MARKETS's goal is to increase agricultural output, facilitate financing to farmers and agro-processing and transform subsistence farming into commercial farming.

WORKSHOP FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

13.(U) Eighty civil society representatives attended a December 8 to 10 workshop on network strengthening under USAID - Nigeria's Advocacy, Awareness, and Civic Empowerment (ADVANCE) project. As a result, we envision that civil society groups will more effectively interact with GON counterparts to advocate for more transparent and accountable governance. The training responded to needs identified by USAID implementing partner PACT through its organizational capacity assessment process, by civil society organizations during their annual stake-holder evaluation, and by USAID in its mid-term evaluation of the ADVANCE project. Qits mid-term evaluation of the ADVANCE project.

14. (U) Embassy Abuja and Consulate General Lagos collaborated on this telegram.

SANDERS